

John Woolman Shop  
47 Mill Street  
Mt. Holly, Burlington County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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John Woolman Shop  
47 Mill Street  
Mt. Holly, Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner: Henry Rosenfield

Date of Erection: 1740

Architect:

Builder: John Ogborn (probable)

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: Front two and one-half;  
rear two stories

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - brick, Flemish  
bond, front stucco; frame addition in rear of later date

Interior walls - plaster

Roof - pitch

Historical Data:

On February 4, 1747 John Woolman purchased of John Ogborn the brick house and lot known as 47 Mill Street. This house has been identified as the scene of Woolman's labors. A small frame shop formerly stood on this lot and was used by Woolman as a tailor shop; this was afterwards moved from the premises. Woolman's business prospered so much that he feared he might grow rich. He, therefore, began to reduce his volume of business and on May 16, 1753 he sold the property to his mother Elizabeth Burr Woolman. In his journal he

wrote:

"Until this year, 1756, I continued to retail goods, besides following my trade as a tailor about which I grew uneasy on account of my business growing to cumbersome. I had begun with selling trimmings for garments and from thence proceeded to sell clothes and linens, and at length having got a considerable shop of goods my trade increased every year, and the way to large business appeared open, but I felt a stop in my mind.

"The increase of business became my burden for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise; yet I believed truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers; and there was now a strife in my mind between the two..... Then I lessened my outward business and as I had opportunity told my customers of my intentions, that they might consider what shop to turn to; and in a while wholly laid down merchandise and followed my trade as a tailor having its apprentice."

Before Woolman sailed for England in 1772 he wrote his mother's will. She left her "brick house in Mt. Holly with a frame shop, and a lot to them belonging to her daughter Rachel". After the house came into the possession of Rachel Woolman she rented it out or part of it to tenants. In the Pennsylvania Gazette for September 25, 1776 there is an advertisement to the effect that John Shields opened a new store on the upper end of Mt. Holly in the house where the late Mr. John Woolman lived. It is not impossible, however, that Elizabeth Woolman lived in this house with her daughter Rachel and her son Asher before her death in 1772. The records at Mt. Holly includes the deed from Rachel Woolman to Samuel Lewis dated March 3, 1793. In this deed it says that the "land together with building thereon the said Rachel Woolman lawful held by virtue of last will of Elizabeth Woolman dated February 11, 1772.

The said Elizabeth Woolman purchased the same of John Woolman by deed dated March 16, 1755, said John Woolman purchased same of John Ogborn by deed dated February 4, 1747".

Samuel Lewis, the architect, was living in this house when he built the Court House (NJ-27). He altered and modernized the house. The dormer windows and the doorway were put on at that time by him. Traces of the original simplicity of the building are visible in the back of the house and in the windows not on the street. The property remained in the Lewis family until 1817 when it was sold to John Dobbins. He bequeathed it to his daughter Sara Budd in 1841. Several transfers are recorded from that time until 1913 when the present owner, Henry Rosenfield, obtained title.

It is interesting to note in connection with this house that back of it stood the "Little Meeting House" to which access to it from Mill Street was through "Meeting House" alley which is described in the original deed as on John Woolman's line. This Meeting House was used as a school house and it was probably the scene of Woolman's labors as a teacher.

#### Bibliography:

Gummere, A. M. (Editor) The Journal and Essays of John Woolman New York, Macmillan, 1922

A search of records in the Secretary of State's Office by Robert M. Falcoy, Mercer County Office

A search of Burlington County records at Mt. Holly by Betty R. Bishop, Burlington County Office

  
Walter C. Pitt

Supervising Historian

Approved:

  
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District Officer

*revised July 1938, JWP*